

March 19, 2010



House Appropriations Committee
House Office Building, Room 120
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

RE: Testimony in support of the \$5 million included in the Governor's proposed FY11 Budget for public library capital projects—Hearings before the Appropriations Committee, March 22, 2010.

Dear Chairman Conway and Distinguished Delegates:

I write to emphasize the importance of (1) *fully funding the \$5 million* included in Governor O'Malley's FY11 budget for public library capital projects, and (2) *maintaining the funding as mandatory*. Your investment **enhances high-quality public education for all ages while leveraging funding**.

HIGH-QUALITY PUBLIC EDUCATION FOR ALL AGES

Along with our award-winning public schools, colleges and universities, Maryland's 24 public library systems are a key component of Maryland's strong educational system, driving economic advancement and improving quality of life. In our unique educational role, libraries deliver *high-quality public education* for literally everyone in the state, and **like the schools, adequate building space is vital to fulfilling our educational mission**, which comprises three pillars: Self-Directed Education, Research Assistance & Instruction, and Instructive & Enlightening Experiences (please see image on reverse side).

MAJOR INCENTIVE FOR LOCAL FUNDING

Thank you for enacting §23-510 of the Education Article, Annotated Code of Maryland, authorizing \$5 million in state funding annually for public library capital projects. While minimal when compared to allocations for schools and colleges, the return on investment is immense. For example:

Howard County Library is scheduled to receive \$500,000 in FY11 toward construction of the new Charles E. Miller Branch & Historical Center, the most pressing project in its *Facilities Assessment and Master Plan*. It is imperative that construction move forward on schedule, as the current facility is increasingly cramped and obsolete. *The \$500,000 from the State is a major incentive for the County to fund the remaining portion of the \$29 million project.*

With public education your top funding priority, it is critical that the *full \$5 million be allocated* for FY11 public library capital projects, and that such funding *remain mandatory*. Thank you for considering our request for this wise investment in the future of education throughout Maryland.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Valerie J. Gross'.

Valerie J. Gross
Chief Executive Officer

PUBLIC LIBRARIES = EDUCATION

Three Pillars

A major component of Maryland’s strong educational system, public libraries deliver **high-quality public education for all ages**. The role of public libraries is best illustrated by the image below, with three pillars that comprise our overall educational program:

- I. **Self-directed Education** through vast collections of items in print, audio and electronic formats; and thousands of online resources (e.g., *Wall Street Journal* and *Access Science*).
- II. **Research Assistance & Instruction** for individuals and groups. This pillar includes classes, seminars and workshops for all ages, taught or facilitated by Library instructors.
- III. **Instructive/Enlightening Experiences** through cultural and community center concepts, events, and partnerships—such as *A+ Partners in Education* and *Choose Civility*.

